

Sixth Thousand.

# JESUS CHRIST IS GOD



BY

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"And the Angel answering, said to her: The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee; and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God."—*Luke I: 35.*



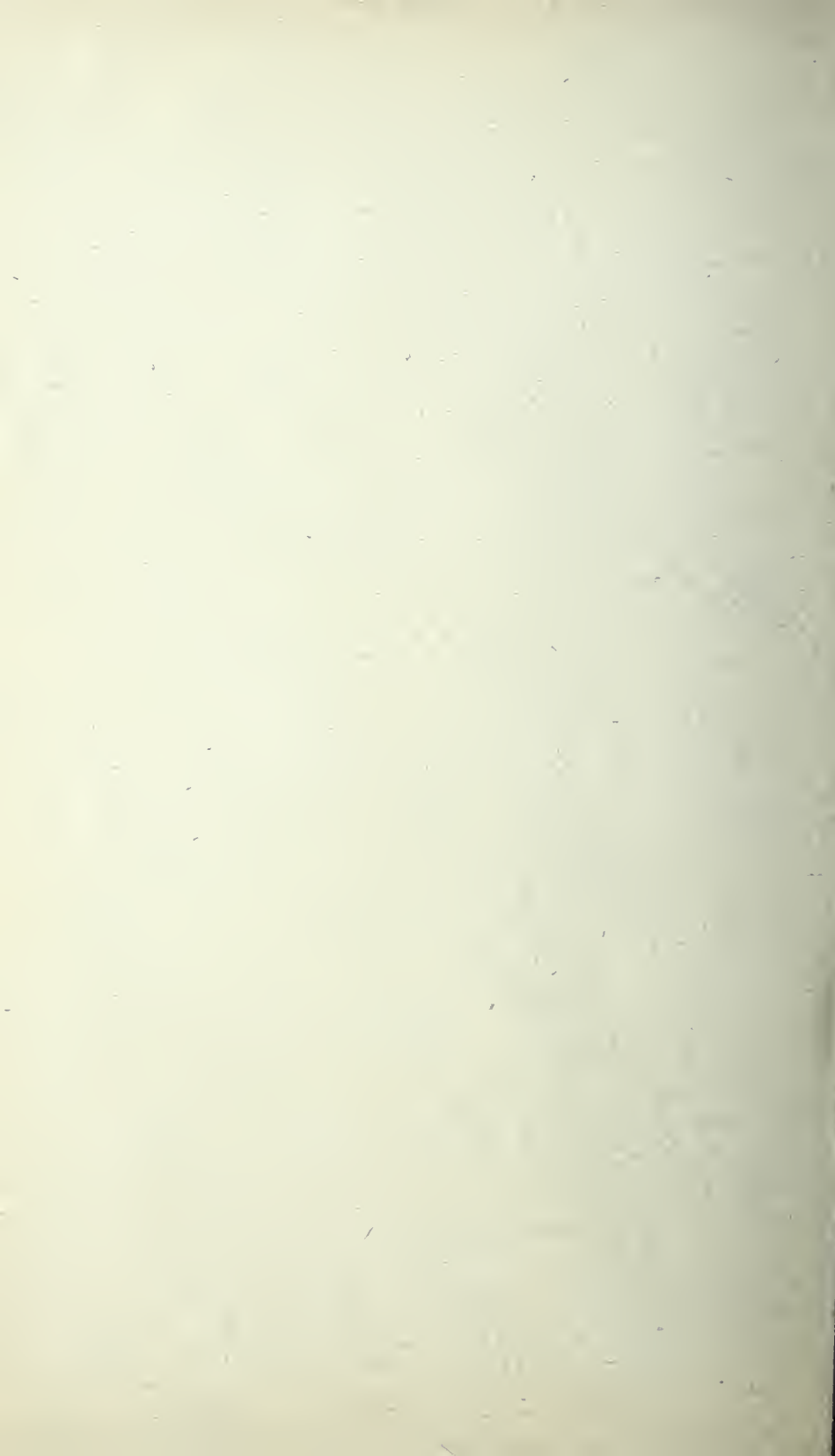
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The Sphinx has recently been painted as the scene of the first resting-place of Mary of Nazareth and Joseph, as they neared the Nile in their flight with the Child Jesus from King Herod. The Mother is represented as reclining with her Babe at the foot of the statue, while Joseph rests upon the sands below. The great stone face is staring at the cloudless and starry sky, as it stared for ages. But "the riddle of the painful earth," which it had asked so long in vain, has reached its solution in the group now resting between the image's immense paws. The Son of God and of the Woman has come. The yearning, hungry gaze that man had always bent on earth and sky, seeking the realization of an ideal above himself, shall rest hereafter with perfect content upon the Child of Mary.

## I.

"YE SHALL BE AS GODS."

We need to appreciate that the doctrine of the Incarnation is not a hard one to accept. There is no revolt in the natural mind against the thought of God becoming man. It is not a thought which arouses aversion in us. Indeed, we give it welcome. That man should be raised to a participation in the divine nature is a difficult thing to *understand*, if the word is meant to imply a full and clear comprehension. But the human race or any part of it has never felt it to be incredible.

To inquire into this favorable tendency of our minds towards the Incarnation is our first task. We shall, I trust, find it of much interest to discuss why men in all

ages have seemed readily inclined to believe that God and man could in some way be brought together on terms of equality. I do not mean to take the reader over the long windings of historical research; my purpose is not a historical treatise. But it is essential to realize that reaching after the possession of the divine is a distinct fact of human experience. In bringing this out, however, I am not going to exclude the historical argument for the Incarnation. To prove that any being comes from God on a special mission, miracles are required; that is to say, the special display of the divine power. Much more necessary are they if he claims to be God himself. We affirm Jesus of Nazareth to be true God, the Creator and Lord of all things, begotten of the Father before all ages, and one and the same being with Him, born of Mary in the fulness of time; in essence, power, wisdom, goodness, and joy true God.

The sense of want in man is of such a depth as to be the universal argument for his need of more than human fruition, and in the moral order it is the irrefragable proof of both his native dignity and his natural incapacity so to demean himself as to be worthy of it. This want is implanted in man, and it attests the need of God in a higher degree than nature can provide. God plants this yearning in the human soul as a gift super-added to the high endowments of innate nobility.

The best spirits God ever made have always felt this huge universe no bigger than a bird-cage. But during the ages prior to Christ's coming human aspiration had beat its wings against the sky in vain.

When God made man to His image and likeness, He impregnated His creature with an infusion of the divine life; what cannot God do with man when He has in him His own divine life to work with? "He breathed into his face the breath of life." What life? A twofold life, the human and the divine; so that God's dealings with man are with a noble being whose every act, if true to his native nobility, suggests the Deity.

The most admirable trait of human nature is the desire for elevation; this is the root of progress, this is the justification of laudable ambition. To aspire to better things is the original law of our nature. The yearning after entire union with God, though not a trait of nature, is nevertheless like the knowledge that there is a God; it is so quickly generated in the mind as to resemble

instinct. How easily do I not know that there is a God! I know without argument that I did not make myself; I know that dead nature, with its mechanical laws, will-less and unthinking, could not plan or make me; I am master of nature. How quickly do I realize there is a supreme being who is the Creator and Lord of all things. By just as quick a movement do I leap into the consciousness that there is nothing in myself good enough for my own ideal, nothing in nature. I must have the Supreme Good in everything, and I am supreme in nothing, although I am a king and nature is my realm.

And yet this eagerness of desire trembles at its own boldness, for it longs to be God's very son. The true revelation of God will have as one of its marks that it seems too beautiful to be anything else than a dream, too much of God to be possible for man to compass; and yet I must have it. In its maxims it seems too disinterested to be real, too difficult in its precepts to be practicable—and yet alone worthy of human dignity. God, who is first and with no second, is the longing of the soul—God to be held and possessed on some awful footing of equality, so that love may be really reciprocal. "Ye shall be as gods" was the only temptation which had a possibility of success in Eden.

Man is essentially a longing being. The human soul is a void, but aching to be filled with God. Man's capacity of knowing craves a divine knowledge; of loving, to enjoy the ecstasy of union with the Deity; of action, to increase the honor and glory of the infinite God; of life, to live as long as God. Daniel's praise from the angel was that he was "a man of desires." It is not contact with God that we want, but unity. It is not enlightenment that the human mind wants, but to be of the focus of light. It is not fellowship with God that we need, but sonship, some community of nature; to be "partakers of the divine nature," as says St. Peter. It is not inspiration from above that will content us, but deification. The end of man is not to be rid of ignorance and sin; these are hindrances to his end, which is to be made divine. The satisfaction of the human heart is a calm of divine peace and joy. The supernatural attraction of the divinity is such a stimulus that human ambition never heard its full invitation till it heard "Be



perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." That marks the lowest point of satisfied human ambition.

Cardinal Newman makes Agellius say to the yet heathen Callista that "the Christian religion reveals a present God, who satisfies every affection of the heart, yet keeps it pure." A present God: less than this were a revelation unworthy of God to a creature instinct already with supernatural divine questioning. In the satisfaction of the affections of such a being the best is a necessity. A present God is God possessed; and He is one with the beloved. I want God so present to me that I can taste and see that the Lord is sweet; I want to be owned by Him; nay, I want to own Him. And this means the change from the relation of Creator and creature to that of Father and son.

There are certain delicate tendencies felt in our soul's best moments towards what is higher. They take the form of perceptions of unreasoned truth, unreasoned because imperative; or they are driftings upon the upward-moving currents of heavenly attraction, making for purity of life; or they discover, as by a divining rod, the proximity of the soul's treasure, causing a distaste for perishable joys. Of these holiest influences every one is some form or beginning of a more than natural yearning for the possession of God in a love which shall have the freedom of equality. Man's aim is God; and every human impulse reaches out, whether blindly or not, towards God; and every revelation of God broadens man's capacity for Him and makes his pursuit more eager. At the summit of reason's ascent the human soul is greeted with a more than natural light, in which it irresistibly looks to be deified.

The teeming mind, the overflowing heart of man, will be content with nothing less than all that God can do and give. "All the rivers of the world," says the Psalmist, "flow down into the sea, and yet the sea doth not overflow." So all the power, and riches and pleasures of this life, if given to our hearts in unstinted measure, would but mock that empty void which can be filled by God alone.

Human life is never known in its solemn and overpowering reality till it is known as destined to union with the life of God. To say that life is real is to say that our interior yearnings for God shall be satisfied by a union divinely real. This greatest of facts is also an

argument. For if all man's higher needs, aims, desires, aspirations, demand an object, then there is an object: the appetite proves the food. So the Psalmist: "My soul thirsts for Thee, oh! how many ways my flesh longs for Thee, O Lord my God." In the spiritual life, wants, longings, aspirations are the appetite; the food is God. The entire possession of God, in very deed and reality, in nature and person—this is the adequate satisfaction of the soul. Its realization is in sharing the divine Sonship. For union with God, as He is known to unaided nature is not enough. By the creative act God made me in His image, yet only His creature; I long to be His son. "All nature is in labor and groaneth, waiting for the revelation of the sons of God." There is a divine communication which I need, and which yet transcends all my natural gifts: I must share God's natural gifts. I must be His son.

The widest horizon of the soul has a beyond of truth and virtue, whose very existence is not understood by the mere natural man, and only the dim outlines of which are caught by the uttermost stretch of vision of even the regenerate soul. Human nature hardly can steadily contemplate this lofty and glorious state, even when it is revealed, much less compass its possession; and yet man instantly learns that there is his journey's end. The dearest victory of mere nature is to know that there is something somewhere in the spiritual universe which it needs and cannot of itself possess; we have a measure of God which overlaps all that we by nature possess of Him.

There is a strength of character everywhere made known to man as the highest fruit of knowledge and love, and which is yet strange to him: a strength to conquer time and space, moral weakness and mental darkness—divine strength. This strength he feels the need of; striving alone, he cannot have it. This strength of God and the character which it generates in us have ever claimed and received the name *supernatural*. Man obtains this quality of being by the infusion of a new life in the spiritual regeneration, by which he is made God's son. He sees the glory from afar, and then he hears, "Unless a man be born again he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

The inequality of men and the difference of races cry aloud for universal possession of God. There is no joy

of life which can be universal except it be God. There is Greek and barbarian, bond and free, male and female, and their common medium of unity, as well as their common joy, can only be God, revealed as a father.

The dignity of man suggests the possibility of the Incarnation; the aspirations of man suggest its probability; the degradation of man cries out for it, and implores its immediate gift. As a matter of fact, the entire human race has ever expected that God would come among men. The ignoble taint of idolatry is thus palliated—a vice so widespread and deep-rooted that without palliation it were fatal to humanity's claim of dignity.

## II.

“LO, THIS IS OUR GOD, WE HAVE WAITED FOR HIM!”

The palliation of the guilt of self-worship by ancient humanity is in the truth that, somehow or other, man is or can be made one with God. That any error may be possible of credence it must taste of truth; man's palate cannot abide unmixed falsehood. Now, in many forms of idolatry men beheld the possible deity instead of the real. When we consider what the Incarnation proved human nature capable of, we can pity as well as condemn that highest form of idolatry called hero-worship. “Ye shall be as gods” was a cunning temptation, because Adam and Eve already felt within them a dignity with something divine in it.

In the far East the Chinese, the Japanese, and other kindred nations have cherished an immemorial tradition that God was to descend upon earth in visible form, to enlighten men's ignorance in person, and redeem them from their sins. One of the most precious results of the later learning has been to show that the Hindoos and the Persians, the two dominant races of southern and central Asia, looked for nothing less than the coming of the Supreme Being among men, to cleanse them from vice and to elevate them to virtue. The Egyptians, Plutarch tells us, looked for the advent of the Son of Isis as a God-redeemer of the world. Humboldt has recorded that among the aboriginal Mexicans there was a firm belief in the Supreme God of Heaven, who would send his own Son upon earth to destroy evil. The same is true of the ancient Peruvians.



But how much clearer was this tradition among the Greeks and the Romans, the two most powerful and most enlightened races of antiquity, and how energetic was its expression! Socrates, at once the wisest man of heathendom and the most guileless, taught his disciples, and through them the entire western civilization, man's incompetency to know his whole duty to God and his neighbor, and his inability to perform even what he does know of it; and he implored a universal teacher from above. Plato bears witness to this teaching of his master and reaffirms it.

The Romans had their Sibylline prophecy of a divine king who was to come to save the world. The illustrious orator Cicero, the enchanting poet Virgil, voice this tradition or this instinct of their imperial race: God is needed, and needed in visible form. The historians Tacitus and Suetonius tell of the universal conviction, based on ancient and unbroken tradition, that a great conqueror, who should subjugate the world, was to come from Judea.

So that the long-drawn cry of the Hebrew prophets, now wailing, now jubilant, always as sure as life and death, and in the course of ages rising and falling in multitudinous cadence among those hills which formed the choir of the world's temple, was not the monologue of a single race, but the dominant note in the harmony of all races. "God himself will come and will save you," says Isaias in solemn prediction. And again: "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him," as if answering by anticipation the question asked by John the Baptist on the part of humanity: "Art thou He that art to come?" No voice ever heard by man has sounded so deep, clear, peaceful, and authoritative as that which said in Judea: "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." They that shall hearken to that voice, "to them shall be given the power to be made the sons of God."

Here, then, is the meaning of the promises made of old. Even to Adam a Redeemer was promised. Abraham was His chosen stock, Israel His race, David His house and family. By Isaias His attributes were sung, by Daniel His coming was fixed as to time, by Micheas Bethlehem was named as the place of His birth. The angel foretold His titles, His royalty, and His divinity to Mary, His mother. The question, "Where is He

that is born King of the Jews, put to the doctors and rulers of Jerusalem by the first pilgrims to His shrine, was answered with decision and the spot pointed out.

O what a boon! To possess God, and to possess Him as our brother; to have His Father as our father, His Spirit as the spouse of our souls! What are all the joys of this life but mockeries compared to the possession of God! O that serene, gentle, tender Master, who came on earth to teach us how to become divine! O that valiant Saviour who died that we might live the life of God!

### III.

#### “MY LORD AND MY GOD.”

Christianity is historical. It deals with the life which the human race has lived. It is not a theory to be considered in the abstract. It is a fact. It has been a fact. It belongs to that narrative of men's lives and deeds which we call history. And Christianity is especially the life and the deeds of one man—its Founder, Jesus Christ.

Look at Christ as a promise and a fulfilment. The Jews expected Him, the nations dreamed of Him, He came, and His name and power have overspread the earth. What an astonishing thought! Yet men have had the brazen boldness to assert, and to try to prove, that Christ never existed! This greatest—not only fact but factor—in all human history was a myth. Though the Gospels were written by eyewitnesses or their depositaries, though Jewish contemporary history tells of Him, though heathen contemporary records tell of Him, though the tracings of ancient art tell of Him, though the unbroken traditions of the whole race tell of Him, men arose a hundred years ago and said He had never existed at all. He existed in prophecy from Adam's time. The oldest and most venerable monuments of history tell of His promise on the spot and in the hour of the first sin; of the dedication of a family and then of a race to produce Him; of the expectation of the nations dimly seeing a future Redeemer; of a line of prophets, workers of marvels, poets; of the gathering of the ages into the fulness of time, of the nations into the unity of government, and then of *His coming*, the God of ages, the King of nations—the gift which the

bending heavens dropped into Mary's bosom, the renewal of all things below.

There is nothing that we claim for Jesus Christ that He has not claimed for Himself, and His testimony is true. He has established a character before the world in which a most conspicuous trait is truthfulness. Who has so much as accused Christ of being an imposter? "For this was I born, for this came I into the world, that I might bear testimony to the truth." Here and there this claim of Christ of being a truth-teller has been denied, but only by some delirious atheist who thus utters his own condemnation. "Never did man speak like this man," is the spontaneous judgment of humanity upon Christ.

But also, "He spoke as one having power." He showed Himself the Master of nature at the same time that He claimed a hearing as a messenger from God. "This beginning of miracles did Jesus at Cana of Galilee, and He manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." He stills the storm, He walks on the water, He vanishes out of sight, He reappears from empty space. "Receive thy sight," He says, and a man born blind is made to see, and this is part of His sermon. He groans and lifts His eyes to Heaven, and a dumb man speaks, and this accredits His message; such events were the universal accompaniments of His teaching. "Young man, I say to thee, arise," and the dead body became alive, sat up and began to speak: and upon such evidences of His power Jesus addressed the people. "Lazarus, I say to thee, come forth;" who could resist Christ preaching at the grave of Lazarus? Only the malicious and the perverse. Then they slew Him. He was dead and buried, His followers scattered, His career ruined. And again He is alive. He is seen, touched, heard, lived with by all His old associates and followers to the number of five hundred, teaching a doctrine which is the very perfection and fulfilment of what He had taught before. From all this we know with absolute certainty that Christ's testimony of Himself, as well as of everything else, is true. "Master," said Nicodemus, "we know that Thou art a teacher come from God, for no man could do the works which Thou dost, unless God were with him."

Now, what is Christ according to His own testimony? He is God. To His own disciples He said: "Have I

been so long a time with you and you have not known Me? He that seeth Me seeth the Father." And He insisted: "Believe you not that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? Otherwise believe for the very works' sake." This was an appeal to a sense of Christ's divinity bestowed by Him upon all who ever came near Him, vague or distinct in proportion to the intelligence and good will of its recipients. Lacordaire calls this "a mystic certainty," which viewed in its interior manifestations we shall consider more fully before concluding. "That all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," was Christ's precept, and the worship of Jehovah insensibly passed into that of the Messiah, absorbing it totally in the hearts of Christ's disciples. It was indeed only by degrees that this dominated the Apostles. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," the first proclamation of the Apostolic faith, was made by Peter; and "Flesh and blood hath not revealed this to thee, but my Father," was our Lord's acceptance of it. It made its final conquest after the Resurrection, when Thomas solemnly exclaimed: "My Lord and my God!"—his reluctant mind compelled by the testimony of his senses, seeing and touching the risen body of his Master. Our Saviour's acceptance of these divine titles—"Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen and have believed,"—is most conclusive of His doctrine. He accepts Thomas's profession of faith, adopts it, anticipates its use by others as the formula of a belief in their case unsupported by sensible contact with His bodily existence.

The result of Christ's teaching was the unanimous conviction of His followers that He was divine. The Gospel and Epistles of St. John, the latest of the Apostolic writers, are conclusive of this. As to the public attitude of the Society which appeared in the world as the Christian Church, St. Paul's teaching is full, is variously expressed, and is all summarized by such words as these: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;" and again: "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

Is it realized how difficult it must have been to teach honest Hebrews, who loathed idolatry above every evil, that a man of their nation and like themselves, was Je-



hovah come in the flesh? Jesus did it, though not by the immediate promulgation of the great doctrine, which would have shocked them. But first He secured a place as Master by the testimony of John the Baptist, and then by His astounding miracles, and always by the impress of His resistless love and wisdom. Afterwards He allowed His divinity to be taught by His works, by His character, previously or in conjunction with His own explicit claim to be divine.

The enemies of Jesus were no less impressed with His claim to be God than were His friends. "They sought the more to kill Him because He said that God was His Father, making Himself the equal with God." In fact, when His credentials as a prophet had been fairly presented, He was as ready to claim divine honors from the Jewish conspirators as from His own disciples. When they quoted Abraham against Him, He said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made I am."—That expression *I am* being the traditional synonym of the Deity among the Jews. "They took up stones therefore to cast at Him," because, as they said, "Being a man, thou makest Thyself God." And this was the condemnation of the Council against Him, that they had heard His claim of divinity from His own mouth, and needed no witnesses to convict Him of it.

#### IV.

##### "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD."

If Jesus Christ was a chosen messenger of God, as all admit, He was 1st, a good man; 2d, a truthful man; 3d, an enlightened man. But He believed that He was God. Hence He was God. For it is evidently impossible, without supposing lunacy, for a man to be deceived about such a stupendous thing as to whether He is God or not.

There are many who admit Christ as a great leader but deny to Him the divine attributes. John Stuart Mill has somewhere said that he knows no better canon of conduct before any act than that the man who is about to do it should ask himself whether Jesus Christ would approve of it or the contrary; and yet Mill was almost an atheist. Such men are numerous, and the deists among them freely admit that Christ was God's

foremost champion, His best accredited messenger, the true leader of the human race. Now, what we say to these persons is that if they are right, then Christ must be God, otherwise God is the author of idolatry, for Christ won divine worship from the beginning.

The mission of Christ to the world is the most distinctively moral and religious intervention of an overruling Providence in the affairs of humanity which ever took place. But its characteristic is the claim of divinity on Christ's part, and the recognition of that claim on the part of His followers. If He be not divine, actually God, then the Supreme Ruler of men's souls has failed both in His messenger and His message, and failed fatally. Christ was sent to eradicate idolatry, which had grown to be the deepest-seated evil of humanity, and to establish impregnably the very opposite, the knowledge and worship of the true God. The lightest belief in Divine Providence identifies its rulings in this sense with Christ and His mission—and they resulted in universal Christ-worship. God must have foreseen that men would finally come to adore Jesus more universally than ever they had adored their idols. The being who conferred on His Apostles the power to forgive sins, to shut and open the gates of heaven, and who accompanied this with the gift of miracles, was most likely to be adored as God among the idolatrous nations. They could with difficulty be dissuaded from paying divine honors to Paul and Barnabas. They *must* have adored Christ.

"The hour cometh and now is when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth,"—not if Jesus Christ be no more than human, for He has won the world's adoration. He is no prophet if He be not God. Christianity was a revolution in the moral and intellectual world so sudden and so vast, and humanly speaking so inexplicable, that it proves its own divine origin.

Certainly Christ is *of* God, *from* God, and therefore *for* God, whatever else may be said of Him. Go on and say the rest: He *is* God or there is no God.

The civilized world was never conquered except by one faith, a conquest in favor of peace among warring nations, self-denial among the sensual and covetous, discipline among the turbulent. Shall all this serve for mere idolatry?

Take away Christ and you have robbed the human race of its only perfect hero. And has He but sunk us into a false worship more hopeless than paganism itself?

Take from mankind what Christ has given of knowledge and love and joy, of freedom and of purity, and what is left? The ashes of the extinct idolatries of pagan Greece and Rome, the shades of conquerors, of orators, of poets, dead books and crumbling monuments. It will not do to say that you have a morality without Christ unless you frankly paganize in principle and in practice. You cannot do away with Christ and hold fast to His morality. You cannot destroy the tree as a pest and claim its fruits as a blessing. But men, taken in their generations, could not and cannot help adoring Him. He found the world in a state of lust, violence, tyranny and horrid idolatry. By His principles and His maxims, by His Church, by His saints and martyrs, He conquered it. His force was unseen and yet irresistible, as God is. Pagan and barbarian went down before Him in a war of ideas. Could it have been other than a divine victory?

In ancient times the entire effort of Providence was to hold men to the worship of the true God, or to restore them to it. This was especially the case in His dealings with the Jews. Shall the final effort result in the annihilation of that worship? To maintain the knowledge of the true God, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David wrought as divine instruments, all in direct line with the Christ, to whom they all pointed, foreshadowing and predicting Him as the perfection of their work. He comes, lives, teaches, dies, establishes His fellowship, and wins the nations. It could not have been for idolatry, and yet He is adored. If God hates anything it is idolatry, and Christ is His foremost representative.

If Christ be not God, He is the author of the most obstinate idolatry ever known. No teaching so awfully authoritative as His, no life so irresistibly attractive, no death so solemn and so triumphant. Has the only result been idolatry?

We have already given Christ's direct claim upon men's worship, and shown how both His disciples and His enemies understood it. But utterances which compared with these are commonplace and vague, would be enough in the mouth of any other religious teacher to convict him of usurping divine honors:

“Lo, I am with you all days, even unto the end of the world.” Who commands the lapse of ages but the King of ages?

“I am the vine; ye are the branches. If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch.” Who but God could say such words?

“Keep My commandments.”

“He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me.”

“Many sins are forgiven her because she hath loved much.” Was Magdalen an idolater?

“If any man come to Me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.” What claim is this for any mere man to make upon his fellow man?

“That they may all be one, as Thou, Father, in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, and that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” Here is a claim of headship of the human race, based on His union with the Father and as a sign of the Father’s approval. In the pagan world, the faintest claim of divinity on the part of a great benefactor of the race added another name to the long list of false gods. Would the true God allow one, who besides being a great and good man was His chosen messenger, to plunge the world into darker depths of idolatry? Even without Christ, the progress of intelligence as we see it in history, would probably have done away with idolatry in course of time: If He be not God, He has fastened it more firmly upon the race;—His wisdom is an idolatrous sophistry, His tenderness of heart an idolatrous snare, His romantic, touching, winning career a lure to the unwary. If Christ is not God, who can blame us for being idolaters? How long the divine worship of Him has endured—far longer than that of the mythical deities of Greece and Rome; how deep it is, how wide! Where, then, is Providence if this be not the true worship?

## V.

“I KNOW MINE AND MINE KNOW ME.”

The entire human race is divided into two classes, those who know Christ in the inner life, and those who



do not. The former bear testimony of Christ to the latter, and their testimony is true. The value of this inner witness is shown by the large number of persons who are silenced but not convinced by the outward and historical testimonies for Christ; conviction comes to them only after an interior experience.

The work of Christ is *personal*. From man to man He goes, teaches, exhorts, entreats, by word, by influence. If He sends a messenger without, He stirs the heart within to hearken to the message. No book can make a man a Christian. No man or number of men can do it unless they be Christ-bearers in life and doctrine, and Christ's Spirit work meantime in a hidden way. On the other hand, there are men to whom Christ would be known if all the books in the world were burned.

"Come unto ME all ye that labor and are heavy burdened."

The evidence of which we speak is not that of an exceptional experience, but of a cloud of witnesses. In every community in the civilized world there are at least a few leading spirits, leading in all moral and beneficent activity, and easily distinguishable from fanatics and visionaries, who characterize their lives as transformed by Christ; and with them and around them is a multitude in a lower grade of conscious union with Him. All these together and everywhere are the kingdom of the Son of God. The evidence of personal knowledge of Christ given by such men as St. Augustine and St. Francis of Assisi, though none of them ever saw Him with their bodily eyes, carries conviction. They say with the Apostle: "We have the witness of the Spirit." Listen to St. Augustine: "What, then, is it that I love, when I love Thee? Neither the beauty of the body, nor the graceful order of time, nor the brightness of light so agreeable to these eyes, nor the sweet melody of all sorts of music, nor the fragrant scents of flowers, oils, or spices, nor the sweet taste of manna or honey, nor fair limbs alluring to carnal embraces. None of these things do I love when I love my God. *And yet I love a certain light, and a certain voice, and a certain fragrancy, and a certain food, and a certain embrace when I love my God, the light, the voice, the fragrancy, the food, and the embrace of my inward man; where that shines to my soul which no place can contain; and where that sounds which no*

*time can measure; and where that smells which no blast can disperse; and where that relishes which no eating can diminish; and where that is embraced which no satiety can separate. This it is that I love when I love my God.*" Such witnesses reaffirm, in a word, by speech, and more than all by action, the conscious presence of that "hidden man of the heart" of whom St. Peter says that he manifests himself "in the incorruptibility of a quiet and a meek spirit."

The greatest activity of Christ is invisible, and His noblest victories are in the secret trysting-places of love in the thoughts of men. The elevating and purifying influence known as the Christian Inner Life, is neither a mere force nor an idea; it is a Person. It is Christ. It is the introduction of a new life, His own life, into men's souls; not superimposed upon the mind, nor imputed to the soul, but infused into it by the spirit of God. "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

This new life is, in its consciousness, a new interior experience, carrying the soul far above the highest flight of reason, and dominating it with a divine authority. It is the most personal of all our unions, and is therefore entirely capable of description. The simple affirmation of this inner experience is of weight as an argument. "I know He is God," says the Christian, "for my inner life has proved it to me."

Apart from the graces attached to office, the real power of religious organizations to convince is not in the spectacle of disciplined masses, but in the influence of regenerate persons; let *them* move forward in unity, and everything bows before their banners. The impulse of a soul filled with God upon one wanting, or at least needing, to be so filled is constantly proved and acknowledged to be resistless. Such evidences as revelation and history give of authority, unity, continuity, and universality are all concerning divine qualities, whose possession is a necessary note of Christ's fellowship. But Christ's kingdom is not exclusively external. "The kingdom of God is within you." The testimony of the inner life is that of a living and present witness, and it is a high motive of credibility. It is monopolized by Christians; no such union is claimed by un-Christian religions: "I know Mine, and Mine know Me."

The dogmatic position of this truth is given by the Council of Trent, which affirms, as a fundamental article

of faith, that belief and hope and love and repentance, if worth anything for eternal life, must be preceded in the soul by the inspiration of the Spirit of God, which is the Spirit of Christ. Christians tell you that by faith they know Jesus Christ as one person knows another; and although this personal knowledge is in a dark manner, yet they say truly, "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain."

Faith is that interior perception, quick and clear, by which the intelligence recognizes the teacher and accepts the truth which he teaches, and this is conferred by Christ as a new and superior activity of the power of knowing. It is the baptismal gift, the first pledge of the supernatural life. In the light of faith Christ reveals Himself as God, and it is to create and maintain this inner power that church, scripture, and tradition are given us. In it the human mind is endowed with a force far beyond its natural gifts, and is made partaker of a divine activity. It is an unshakable certainty of conviction, a heavenly clearness of perception, and an intuitive knowledge of a kind superior to that of natural reason; it is what the Apostle calls "having the mind of Christ." This has a twofold effect on us: one to dominate the mental forces, and the other to stimulate their activity, proposing to them an infinitely adequate end. "Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not." So that Christian faith is the evidence of the substantial personal presence of the Spirit of Christ within us.

The first fruit of faith is hope—"Christ in you, the hope of glory;" that is to say, out of the root of high and supernatural knowledge of Christ's divine presence within me springs a divine assurance of His purpose that the union shall be perpetual. We have faith in order that we may know Christ, the object of love; hope that we may courageously journey towards our heavenly home; but we have love that we may possess Christ, for love is the unitive virtue. Faith says: Christ is here; Hope says: He will abide; Love says: He is mine. We know that it is the Divine Son that is within us, for His presence communicates to us a son's love for the Eternal Father. "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."

Faith, hope, and charity, knowledge, confidence, and



love, are the entire life of the renewed man. "Now I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Surely a man can give testimony of his life; and such is the witness of the Christian to Christ. Faith is the light, and hope is the warmth, but love is the very fire of Jesus Christ in our hearts. "Was not our heart burning within us whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures," said the two who met Him on the way to Emmaus. This explains why simple men can stand their ground against learned scoffers. Even when puzzled by sophistries they have an interior view of the truth, coupled with a personal guarantee. Resistance to doubt as well as to vice is confided by them to that hidden man of the heart of whom St. Peter speaks.

This interior union with Christ is the spur of heroism, the seed of martyrdom, the sweetness of repentance, the fortitude of weakness, all of which forces are arguments bearing witness to their origin: "I can do all things in Christ, who strengtheneth me." No man has ever deliberately adhered to the doctrine of Christ as the Son of God, and sought to obey His precepts, but that his inner life was most distinctly enlightened and inflamed with a force far above his natural capacity—a force consciously present, and felt to be divine. "If a man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself." The affirmation of this by men and multitudes is competent and unimpeachable evidence. The proof of it by the martyr's heroism, the pauper's cheerful patience, the repentant sinner's abounding hope, the dullard's wisdom, the superhuman benevolence of the Sister of Charity, is irresistible.

Not only has the Christian religion always looked true, it has always felt true. We dwelt in the beginning upon the longing of the soul for sonship with God, affirming that as the appetite proves the food, so the divine sonship was not only a possible, but altogether a probable, though supernatural, end of human aspiration. A co-ordinate argument is the one we are now concluding, for digestion and assimilation prove a food still more conclusively than appetite. "He that believeth in the Son of God hath the testimony of God in himself." All who have tried any other object of devoted love—ambition, science, pleasure—mournfully agree that they remain unsatisfied. All who try *this* object of burning



human love exclaim together, in an ecstasy, that they have received a fulness of satisfaction beyond the scope of created power to bestow. The object is divine—it is the only end of man. If I am conscious of an excellence within me, which is not myself because it is infinite, and which when I love it assimilates me to itself, my affirmation of its presence and character commands respect. If the analysis of a raindrop tells of an infinite Creator, how much rather may the introspection of a single soul reveal the infinite Lover of men.

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